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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 000007

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 2020/01/05

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SUBJECT: UGANDA: DOOR TO DOOR NRM REGISTRATION WORRIES OPPOSITION
PARTIES

REF: 09 KAMPALA 01097; 09 KAMPALA 01323

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REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Uganda's ruling National Resistance Movement (NRM) is going door-to-door to see what persons are NRM members, and compare the Electoral Commission's voter registry with the NRM's own findings about party affiliations. Worried constituents called opposition MPs to report that local government and security officers are entering homes to inquire about residents' political allegiances. Out of fear, most citizens will simply say they are NRM supporters. Opposition leaders fear Security Minister and NRM Secretary General Amama Mbabazi will use the NRM data to intimidate Electoral Commission officials into deleting opposition members from the Commission's voter registry. On December 22, an NRM spokesman confirmed that government officials are going house-to-house to update NRM membership rolls in advance of the February 2011 elections. End Summary.

Voting For Museveni in 2011?

¶2. (C) Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) parliamentarian Abdu Katuntu told PolOff on December 17 that local government officials and/or district level security officers are going door-to-door in some parts of rural Uganda to register residents' political affiliations. Katuntu, who represents the southeastern district of Iganga, said he and an FDC parliamentarian from Bugiri both received calls from constituents who reported that local government and security officers were in their homes asking whether they belonged to the NRM. Kantuntu said he instructed his constituents to say they support the NRM to avoid trouble. On December 18, local media reported that FDC legislators Kassiano Wadri and Geoffrey Ekanya informed Parliament that local council officials are conducting house-to-house registrations of NRM members. Ekanya, who is from eastern Uganda, said he was told the registrations were directed by the NRM Secretariat to assess the strength of the party in advance of the February 2011 elections.

¶3. (C) On December 24, Katuntu told PolOff that he believes Security Minister and NRM Secretary General Mbabazi is using the Uganda Electoral Commission's voter registry to cross-check internal NRM membership lists and build the NRM's overall membership database. Katuntu alleged that the Commission's database is administered by security officers working for Mbabazi, and that Mbabazi may use the results of the NRM's membership drive to remove opposition supporters from the Commission's national voter registry

14. (C) On January 4, FDC vice president for eastern Uganda, Proscovia Salaamu Musumba, and members of the Inter-Party Cooperation (IPC) coalition told PolOffs that NRM registrations are occurring throughout Uganda, and that Mbabazi is creating a "parallel" voter registry independent of the Electoral Commission. Musumba said the Electoral Commission's electronic registry database is managed by Security Ministry IT personnel who report to Mbabazi, and that the Security Ministry stores backups of the Electoral Commission's data at two Ministry offices in Kampala. Like Katuntu, Musumba said she fears Mbabazi will use information assembled during the NRM membership drive to delete the names of opposition supporters from the Electoral Commission's voter registry.

NRM: Nothing Unusual

15. (SBU) On December 22, NRM spokesman Ofwono Opondo confirmed to PolOff that the NRM is indeed conducting a nationwide survey of

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party members. Opondo said local government officials are involved in the membership drive, and allowed that in some cases government-appointed Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) may have enlisted the assistance of Gombolola Internal Security Officers (GISOs) to help identify party members. GISOs are un-uniformed sub-county security officers who report to local government officials.

Comment: NRM Intimidation Tactics

16. (C) Minister Mbabazi announced the NRM's nationwide membership drive in September, declaring that local level officials should know and be able to identify all NRM members in their constituencies (ref. A). In November, Mbabazi's daughter told the U.S. Mission that the NRM was compiling its own database of NRM members and registered voters to serve as a check on what the Mbabazis regard as the Electoral Commission's flawed voter register (ref. B). A door-to-door canvassing of citizens' political affiliations by government officials and security officers indicates how Mbabazi's "membership" drive is impacting Ugandan voters. Going to private citizens' homes to pressure them to declare their political affiliations to local government officials and security services constitutes a serious violation of democratic electoral processes. It will undoubtedly lead some opposition supporters to conclude - perhaps rightly - that the integrity of the upcoming elections is already being compromised.
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